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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the structure of negative sentences in the Thai language, based on data gathered from two native speakers. It is shown that the Thai negative marker generally occurs between the noun phrase (subject) and the verb phrase in simple active sentences and in passive sentences. Negation of noun phrases is also allowed in Thai, with a marker. The way in which negation works in a tag is also demonstrated. Double and triple negations are not allowed in Thai, nor is a negative marker allowed at the end of a sentence. However, a negation marker can be used at the beginning of a sentence. (MSE)

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THAI NEGATION

BY

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HISTORY

This study is an attempt to analyze the structure of negative sentences in the Thai language, based on personal meetings with Ms. Araya Mera and Mr. Kittikoon Chompupong, who were the consultants for the Thai Field Study Class. Since Ms. Araya Mera and Mr. Kittikoon Chompupong were born and raised in Bangkok, Thailand, therefore, I can assume that the language might be standard Bangkok Thai native dialogue, although I understood from the consultants that there are many different dialects within the Thai language. Thai belongs to the Tai family. Thailand is the only country where people use the Thai language for their communication. All the data were taken in class from the consultants, and most of it I collected form Mr. Chompupong through personal meetings. Professor Aaron Broadwell and Professor Lee Bickmore initiated this project, and their help has been appreciable. As a matter of fact, it would have been impossible to finish the job without their help. I also wish to express my gratitude to the members of my class~~mate.~~

INTRODUCTION

I tried to provide the actual phonemic transcription and tone marker. My goal of this project is to analyze Thai negation

patterns. I will show that the Thai negation marker always occurs between the noun phrase (subject) and the verb phrase in simple active sentences, and also in the passive sentences. Negation of noun phrases is also allowed in Thai with some marker. I will also demonstrate how negation works in a tag. Double negation and triple negations are not allowed in Thai. I will also clarify how negation works if the negation marker is placed in front of a sentence and the negation marker cannot be at the end of the sentence. In Thai, it is possible that the antecedent is negative and the consequence is positive, or the antecedent is positive and the consequence is negative.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

For the typographical purposes, the transcription of phonemic notation used here is based on the following:

Tone marker: 1 = H tone, 2 = L tone, 3 = rising, 4 = falling, 5 = mid tone and 0 = I'm not sure.

Vowels: u' = ɯ, o' = ɔ , ae = æ ; diphthongs u'a = ɯa etc.

Length: It is indicated by a colon: a:, u': e':, ae:, etc.

Other things: glottal stop is written [?], ŋ is written 'ng'.

THAI SENTENCE NEGATION

First, if we wish to change a positive (simple active sentence) to its negative counterpart, the simplest way to do it

is to add a negation marker (may^{1} = no/not) in between the noun phrase (subject) and the verb phrase. Thai allows for a sentence to be grammatically correct without an auxiliary. If a sentence contains an auxiliary, then the negation marker comes before the auxiliary.

S --------> NP + NEG + (AUX) VP

1. 'I do not go' phom^{3} may^{1} pay^{5}
I no go

2. 'she has not gone' khun^{5} phuying^{50} may^{1} pay^{5}
she fem. marker no go

3. 'he has not been going to school'

khun^{5} phuchay^{12} may^{1} day^{1} pay^{5} ro:ng riEn^{52}
he male marker no aux go school

4. (a).'that little red book is not good'

nangsu:^{13} seyidae:ng^{123} lam^{1} lek^{5} lam^{1} nan^{1} may^{1} di:^{1}
book red class small that no good

(b). 'that little red big dog did not come home'

sunak^{51} seyidae:ng^{123} toa^{5} nan^{1} may^{1} day^{1} klep^{5} ba:n^{5}
dog red body that no aux come home

5. 'the first little boy is not happy'

dek^{5} phuchay^{12} khon^{5} toa^{5} lek^{5} lek^{5} may^{1} day^{1} khwam^{5}
boy male marker class body small no aux happy

Notice that no additional helping verbs (like "do" in English) is required in sentences (1) and (2) in order to make a negation of a sentence. But sentences (3), (4) and (5) have auxiliaries. According to my consultant, the above sentences can be with/without auxiliary in Thai standard.

Example (1) can be "phom^{3}(I) may^{1}(no/not) day^{1}(aux) pay^{5}(go)" The interesting thing is that it does not only mean "I do not

go", but it also means the following: I am not going, I have not gone. (note p. 34-35). My consultant told me that in Thai there is no past tense, which means the above particular example also means "I was not going" and "I had not gone". The fact is that the negation marker always comes before the verb for any simple active sentence, and also that the negation marker comes before the auxiliary. The following evidence proves that the passive sentence is also the same.

6. 'A pen was not given by him'

   paka:^{22} may^{1} day^{1} nay^{5} doy^{1} khun^{5} phuchay^{12}

   pen no aux that give by male marker

7. 'The book was not given by him'

   nangsu:^{13} may^{1} day^{1} an^{5} doy^{1} khun^{5} phuchay^{12}

   book no aux read give by male marker

Obviously, at this point we can say that it does not matter whether a sentence is active or passive. The negative marker "may^{1}" always comes before a verb phrase, even though the object acts as a subject. It seems to me that when an object becomes a subject in a sentence, the object is considered to be a principal subject.

NEGATION OF NOUN PHRASE

At first I thought that it might be possible to apply negation to individual words or phrases in the Thai language. If we wish to change a positive noun phrase to its negative

counterpart, the simplest way to do so is to add "may^{1}"+ "mi:^{1}" at the beginning of the phrase, because there is not one word in a negation maker for any noun phrase in Bangkok Thai. The expression "may^{1} mi:^{1}" is used to negate Thai noun phrases. But it is not the case.

9. 'there are no dogs' may^{1} mi:^{1} sunak^{51}
no have dog

* 'no dog' may^{1} sunak^{51}
no dog

10. 'there are no big dogs' may^{1} mi:^{1} sunak^{51} toayi:^{34}
no have dog big

* 'no big dog' may^{1} sunak^{51} toayi:^{34}
no dog big

11. 'it is not that boy's sister' may^{1} mi:^{1} pisaw^{12} khon^{5} dek^{5}
no have sister poss boy

* 'not that boy's sister' may^{1} pisaw^{12} khon^{5} dek^{5}
no sister poss that

The question is how is negation of the noun phrase going to work in a complete sentence? The following example will clarify that there will be no change.

12. 'there is no big dog came in'

may^{1} mi:^{1} sunak^{51} toayi:^{34} khoma^{5}
no have dog big came in

* may^{1} sunak^{51} toa yi:^{34} khoma^{5}

13. 'that boy's sister is not telling the truth'

may^{1} mi:^{1} pisaw^{12} khon^{5} dek^{5} phochay^{51} khonday^{51} bo^{5} kham^{3} jing^{1}
no have sister class boy male marker tell truth

* may^{1} pisaw^{12} khon^{5} dek^{5} phochay^{51} khonday^{51} bo^{5} kham^{3} jing^{1}

Apparently, Thai does not allow the negation of noun phrases.

TAG QUESTIONS

The tag, which consists of an auxiliary plus a pronoun, is interrogative in English (e.g. does he/she?, isn't it?). It was very interesting for me to discover that Thai can have the same English patterns without the auxiliary. After making a sentence, we can easily add a tag question and this tag (whether positive or negative) depends on the main clause of the sentence. If it is positive, the tag is likely to be negative and if it is negative, the tag will be positive. The following examples are submitted as evidence:

14. This book is difficult, isn't it?'

nangsu:^{13} lam ni^{12} [?]yeak^{3}, may^{1} chay^{1} ro:^{5}?
book class this difficult, no yes or

15. she goes to school, doesn't she?'

khaw^{3} pay^{5} ro:ng riEn^{52}, may^{1} chay^{1} ro:^{5}?
she go school no yes or

16. this book is not difficult, is it?'

nangsu:^{13} lam ni^{12} may^{1} day^{1} [?]yeak^{3} chay^{1} mi:^{1}?
book class this no aux difficult, yes have

17. she does not go to school, does she?'

khaw^{3} may^{1} day^{1} pay^{5} ro:ng riEn^{52}, chay^{1} mi:^{1}?
she no aux go school yes have

It appears that the rule should be NEG. + chay^{1} + mi:^{1} for positive tag with negative clause and NEG. + chay^{1} + ro:^{5} for negative tag with positive clause To justify this rule, I would like to test two other sentences: one in which both the principal

clause and the tag are positive, and the other in which both the principal clause and the tag are negative.

18. This book is difficult, is it?

* nangsu:^{13} lam ni^{12} y[ʔ]ak^{3}, chay^{1} mi:^{1}?

book class this difficult, yes have

19. she does not go to school, doesn't she?

* khaw^{3} may^{1} day^{1} pay^{5} ro:ng riEn^{52}, may^{1} chay^{5} ro:^{5}?

she no aux go school no yes or

Notice that the preceding sentences describe a tendency, but that rule is inflexible. Sentence 18 and 19 are incorrect in both Thai and English. This leads me to check if Thai allows for double or triple negation in a sentence.

DOUBLE AND TRIPLE NEGATIONS

Thai does not have double or triple negation like English. Double negation in Thai does not make any sense. The following examples are not prescriptive sentences, even though most people will understand them as negative sentences. Kittikoon also said that his word-for-word translation does not make sense (one point he also made is that double negation in Thai is also considered to be a positive sentence when sound is translated into meaning):

20. I don't want no dinner'

* phom^{3} may^{1} tongkan^{15} may^{1} kin^{5} aha:n^{23}

I no want no eat food

21. I don't say nothing'

* phom^{3} may^{1} tongkan^{15} may^{1} phod^{5} a[?]ray^{51}
I no want no say what

22. I can't get no rest no how'

* phom^{3} may^{1} sa:mot^{5} may^{1} day^{1} younri^{00}
I no can no rest no aux how

Araya and Kittikoon both consulted the situation and came to the conclusion that they are not meaningful sentences and no one uses such sentences in the Thai language. Perhaps, negation of noun phrase "may^{1} kin^{5} aha:n^{23}, may^{1} phod^{5} a[?]ray^{5}, may^{1} sa:mot^{5} , are the cause that sentences are incorrect.

NEGATION-WORD IN SUFFIX/PREFIX

In Thai, it is impossible to put the negation marker at the end of the sentence (like in English) and this type of sentence is considered to be the simple sentence, therefore the negation marker always comes after the subject.

23. I said nothing' phom^{3} may^{1} day^{1} phod^{5}
I no aux say

24. I have none' phom^{3} may^{1} mi:^{1} a[?]ray^{5}
I no have what

25. she went nowhere' khaw^{3} may^{1} day^{1} pay^{5}
she no aux go

Thus, sentence 23, 24 and 25 are the evidence that negation marker cannot be at the end of the 'thai' sentences. But I have

31. 'if you are a good boy, then Santa will come.'

tha^{3} khun^{5} baen^{5} dek^{55} thi^{1} Santa^{55} chat^{5} ma:^{5}
if you is boy at Santa will come

32. 'if you study, then you will pass.'

tha^{3} khun^{5} an^{5} nangsu:^{13} khun^{5} chat^{5} pan^{5}
if you read book you will pass

NEGATIVE & RELATED PREFIXES/SUFFIXES

My next job was to find if there are any prefixes/suffixes like in English, such as un-, in-, im-, ir-, -less, etc. etc, which are used to negate sentences without the use of negation markers not or no.

33. 'I am unsuccessful.'

phom^{3} baen^{5} khon^{5} thi^{1} may^{1} mi:^{3} khuamsamelet^{5500}
I is class at no have successful

My consultant was unable to find any word containing such kind of prefixes/suffixes. He also mentioned that perhaps those do not exist in the Thai language. Therefore, it is clear enough that negative marker is always a separate word.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my paper tries to show a systematic analysis of how Thai negation works within the correct form of the Thai language. I was able to consult with Kittikoon, who helped to

steer me in the right direction concerning my assumptions about how negation is used within the Thai language. From all these observations, I have come up with the following conclusion about Thai negation:

1. S --------> N(SUB) + NEG + (AUX)VP
2. Negation of NPis invalid.
3. Positive tag with negative clause should be
   NEG. + Chay + mi:
4. Negative tag with positive clause should be
   NEG + Chay + ro:
5. Double/Triple negation in a sentence are not allowed.
6. Thai negation can be at the beginning of the sentence but cannot be at the end of the sentence.
7. A sentence with more than one clause allows double negation/positive.
8. Thai-Words do not have any pre-fixes, which can cause sentence to be negative.